

1 Deputy Pisano, was given access to those large sums of  
2 cash.

3 Q Do we know what large sums of money?

4 A No, sir. It was never defined for me.

5 Q What do you mean she was given access to  
6 it?

7 A She was told whenever she needed cash,  
8 she could go in and get whatever she needed.

9 Q Do we know the source of the money?

10 A No, sir, I do not.

11 Q Were you led to believe that it was  
12 earned by the judge and his personal money?

13 A I was never led to believe anything with  
14 respect to the source of those funds.

15 Q So you drew no conclusions about that?

16 A Correct.

17 Q Do you keep large sums of money in your  
18 office?

19 A No. I've been married 24 years. I've  
20 got maybe \$20 in my pocket, and that's about all I  
21 carry on me.

22 Q Did you have more on Monday? I mean, are  
23 you dwindling through it or --

24 A Well, I'm dwindling because I traveled  
25 last weekend. So I hit the ATM before I left, and I

1 haven't filled up the Suburban with 42 gallons of gas,  
2 so I probably have a little more than that.

3 Q Were you aware or were you informed of a  
4 safety deposit box that was kept in the judge's office  
5 that also had money in it?

6 A Well, no, it was a safety deposit box in  
7 some bank or financial institution, I believe.

8 Q All right. But now this is separate and  
9 apart from what I just asked you about; is that right?

10 A Yes. Yes.

11 Q Okay. Tell us what you know about the  
12 safety deposit box.

13 A Deputy Pisano told me that Mike Sheehan,  
14 Corporal Mike Sheehan, and Gaspar Ficarrotta co-owned,  
15 were joint signatories on a safety deposit box that  
16 contained large sums of money.

17 Q Were you curious as to the source of  
18 those funds?

19 A Well, yes. Anytime I hear about large  
20 sums of money, whether it's in a judge's office or in a  
21 safe deposit box, yes, I am.

22 Q What, if anything, did you ask in  
23 follow-up?

24 A Well, I have asked repeatedly of Deputy  
25 Gay and Deputy Pisano, you know, "Were their bribes?"

1 Were there payoffs?" And they have both said to their  
2 knowledge no. Because if I had an inkling that there  
3 was a bribe, a payoff, a kickback, I would go straight  
4 to the FBI and U.S. Attorney's Office.

5 Q Well, they weren't suggesting to you that  
6 this wasn't a legitimate cash barrel --

7 A No. No. I'm not sure Tara knows where  
8 that money came from. I know Sylvia doesn't, at least  
9 I don't think she does.

10 But Tara indicated to me in response to  
11 my direct questioning that she did not know where the  
12 cash had come from, but that it was large sums of cash,  
13 and that she also was curious as to the source of this  
14 income.

15 Q Do you know what institution that that  
16 box is at?

17 A No, sir. She also mentioned a storage  
18 area that Sheehan and Ficarrotta had together.

19 Q That's my next question. You're doing  
20 great.

21 A I'm sorry.

22 Q Go ahead.

23 A She mentioned a storage area. She  
24 indicated she didn't know what was kept in the storage  
25 area, but they were joint areas of a storage area for

1 storage of something.

2 Q Now, "they," that's Mike Sheehan --

3 A Mike Sheehan, the Corporal, and Judge  
4 Gaspar Ficarrotta. These are the allegations Tara  
5 related to me.

6 Q What about a bank account?

7 A I'm not aware of a bank account.

8 Q I'm going to share my note with you.

9 "Pisano advised Judge Holder that she is aware of a  
10 bank account to which Judge Ficarrotta and Hillsborough  
11 County Deputy Sheehan both have signature authority."  
12 Does that ring a bell?

13 A Not as I sit here. I remember the safe  
14 deposit box. Again, I never wrote any of this down.  
15 Obviously I know why now. But I knew that Tara had  
16 given the journal, which she stated contained all of  
17 these allegations in great detail, to the JQC.

18 I was satisfied that the JQC would take  
19 appropriate action. I had concerns that if the JQC  
20 discovered allegations of illegal activity, not  
21 immoral, not unethical, not unprofessional, I had  
22 concerns whether they would report that illegal  
23 activity to the appropriate law enforcement agency,  
24 whether it be the State Attorney, or the Sheriff's  
25 Office, or the FBI, or whomever. I had that concern.

1 I still have that concern.

2 I'm not certain what the JQC does with  
3 these things if they discover illegal activity as  
4 opposed to unethical, unprofessional, and violations of  
5 our Judicial Code.

6 Q Judge, I can assure you this group's got  
7 the same concerns.

8 A Yes, I know.

9 Q Were you made privy to any fundraising  
10 activities undertaken by Judge Ficarrota in Judge  
11 Ficarrota's office regarding attorneys?

12 A I was, yes, sir.

13 Q Tell us about that.

14 A Deputy Pisano relayed to me that Judge  
15 Gaspar Ficarrota had been actively involved in  
16 soliciting funds for the re-election of Sheriff Cal  
17 Henderson for Hillsborough County Sheriff for this  
18 year's election, 2000. And that he had solicited  
19 campaign contributions from various attorneys that  
20 practiced before him for the re-election of Sheriff  
21 Henderson, and had attended events designed to solicit  
22 campaign contributions for the Sheriff's re-election.

23 Q I don't want to take anything for  
24 granted. What, if anything, is wrong with that?  
25 Anything illegal about it?

1           A           It's a direct violation of the Judicial  
2 Code, our Canons of Ethics. And, boy, you know, I  
3 haven't looked at the Florida Statutes lately. The  
4 hair on the back of my neck is standing up. But  
5 obviously these lawyers that come before us, you know,  
6 we, as judges, have tremendous authority and some would  
7 say power over these men and women.

8                   Obviously, if I call somebody up and say,  
9 "Look, I want you to give a maximum contribution of  
10 \$500 to the Sheriff's re-election campaign," yeah, any  
11 lawyer that practices in front of me would probably  
12 say, "Yes, sir, Judge, I will do that."

13                   Well, that's absolutely contrary to our  
14 Judicial Code, but more importantly, may constitute  
15 extortion or some other violation of Florida law. I  
16 leave it to real smart people like Mr. Hill to figure  
17 out what laws have been broken.

18                   As a judge, I'm half smart and I rely on  
19 those prosecutors to bring cases to me. And I've been  
20 in the Criminal Division. And then I determine if they  
21 are, (1) legally sufficient; (2) proved beyond a  
22 reasonable doubt if I'm sitting as the finder of fact,  
23 finder of law. If I'm not, then I leave it up to the  
24 jury, six real smart people.

25           Q           Have you heard anything or concluded

1 anything that you think is a relationship between the  
2 fundraising activities political for the Sheriff and  
3 these monies that we've discussed either in a safe  
4 deposit box or cash in the office?

5 A Have I heard anything?

6 Q Have you concluded, have you drawn any  
7 conclusions or heard?

8 A Well, logical -- you know, we in the law,  
9 you know, we use that reasonable person standard,  
10 whether it's a reasonable man or a reasonable woman.

11 And I think any reasonable person would  
12 be suspicious if Ficarrota and/or Sheehan, and Sheehan  
13 was involved in that process as well, were out there  
14 soliciting all this money, you know.

15 Was it taken in checks? Was it taken in  
16 cash? Obviously, cash is real hard to keep track of.  
17 So, you know, I would -- I have drawn what I think to  
18 be a reasonable conclusion that this matter deserves to  
19 be looked into and should be fully investigated because  
20 it smacks not only of impropriety, but potential  
21 illegality. That's the conclusion I have drawn.

22 Q Maybe one of the last points I want to  
23 ask about, were you aware that threats had allegedly  
24 been made against Pisano's 12-year-old son?

25 A Both she and Deputy Gay, Sylvia, told me

1 that Gaspar had made a statement, "Don't ever turn your  
2 back on your son," to Tara Pisano when they were  
3 breaking up in or about that April 1999 time frame.

4 Tara had -- alleges that Gaspar said that  
5 directly to her. And obviously Sylvia was just  
6 repeating what Tara had told her. I don't believe she  
7 was present when that alleged statement was made.

8 Q You know, Judge, we didn't come over here  
9 to get involved in a lot of these things. We came over  
10 here for a very specific reason. And yet we find out,  
11 as we look into that, it just naturally leads to some  
12 of these other areas.

13 A Yes, sir.

14 Q My question to you is, because I'm about  
15 through and I want to make sure that the Grand Jurors  
16 get all their questions answered, but is there anything  
17 on your mind that I haven't asked you about or that you  
18 think we need to know about and would like to share  
19 with us?

20 A Both on its surface, in the middle, and  
21 underneath we in this circuit have for many years had  
22 some real bad things going on in this courthouse. I've  
23 just recently become aware of some of those.

24 Because I am, for all intent and  
25 purposes, an outsider, a new person coming in, having



1    been elected. I didn't go through that appointment  
2    process. And I'm -- I'm glad of that, to be honest  
3    with you. I'd rather be elected by the people.

4                   And the Chief Judge and I have had  
5    several conversations regarding this whole mess,  
6    beginning with Ward and then continuing to Ficarrota,  
7    Chief Judge Alvarez and what he did and what he didn't  
8    do with respect to these bad things going on. And, you  
9    know, we're the judicial branch of government. And I'm  
10   extremely proud to do what I do every day, and I take  
11   it very seriously.

12                   And I am absolutely offended at some of  
13   the behavior that's gone on in this courthouse for a  
14   long time. And I am not content with the response that  
15   the President does it, or these are just doing men  
16   doing what men do. I'm offended by that statement.

17                   That statement's been made. And it's got  
18   to stop, and it's got to stop right now. We're paid to  
19   do a job. We're paid a good salary. And I look at it  
20   as a higher calling.

21                   You know, some would say we have all this  
22   power. It's not about power, and it shouldn't be. It  
23   ought to be about doing the right thing, about, you  
24   know, exercising that discretion that we have been  
25   given by the people.

1           You know, we put our hand on a Bible when  
2 we're sworn in and we swear, not affirm, we don't  
3 affirm, we swear that we will uphold the laws of the  
4 State of Florida, the Constitution of the State of  
5 Florida, that we will serve the people that elect us or  
6 appoint us, people that pay our salaries.

7           You know, and that's what it ought to be  
8 about. And for some reason some of us in this  
9 courthouse have lost sight of that goal, that  
10 aspirational goal, that I think we should have. You  
11 know, whether it's the President, or the Governor, or  
12 the Congressman, or, you know, the street sweeper, you  
13 know, we that work for the public that accept that  
14 money every month, we ought to be doing the public's  
15 business. And certainly we might make mistakes as  
16 judges.

17           You know, sometimes we don't have all the  
18 data, sometimes we're given bad data, sometimes people  
19 even perjure themselves in front of us, and we might  
20 make an error based on that perjury, those lies.

21           But darn it all, we are supposed to  
22 exercise the discretion that God gave us, fulfill the  
23 responsibilities of the office that we hold, and we  
24 ought to be doing the right thing. And more often than  
25 not, it's just not that hard to know what's right and

1 what's wrong, what's legal and what's illegal.

2 And while certainly we might experience  
3 those gray areas, you know, those are few. And I don't  
4 think those have been experienced in that action or in  
5 this courthouse with respect to what you folks are  
6 hearing about right now. I just don't see it that way.

7 You know, my life has been a case study  
8 for the ethics courses that I teach over at the  
9 University of Phoenix because I have spoken out, I have  
10 bucked the system, I have gone public. And I'll be  
11 honest with you, but for the media involvement about a  
12 year ago, I don't think the JQC case with Judge Ed Ward  
13 would have gone anywhere. It would have died. It  
14 would have been swept under the rug and he would still  
15 be a judge today. And he'd still be allowed to inflict  
16 the damage on the women that he inflicted for many  
17 years in this courthouse using that robe and that  
18 office to absolutely destroy these women.

19 And some might say, well, that was  
20 consensual. Those women obviously knew what they were  
21 doing. I don't buy that for one second. I don't buy  
22 it. I don't accept it. Some might, but I don't.  
23 That's the way I feel. And I would welcome any  
24 questions from you folks if you have any.

25 Yes, ma'am.

## EXAMINATION

BY GRAND JUROR:

Q I have one question. Whenever the office opens in the morning, I'm talking about the chamber, --

A Yes, ma'am.

Q -- the entire area, --

A Yes.

Q -- who is usually the first person there in the morning that opens things up?

A Usually me between 7:00 and 7:30. I never enter or rarely enter through any door other than this one. I come in through this door. I unlock it using my key. I immediately flip on the light switches. I'll usually go right in my office and turn on my computer, come out and turn on Lori's computer.

I will then go make coffee. So I will go back in the bathroom, I'll fill up the coffee pot, come back, make coffee. I will make sure the computers are on. I will sign any Orders that I haven't signed the night before. But I'm generally there between 7:00 and 7:30 a.m. First hearing is not usually until 8:45.

Q Are the doors pretty much uniformly closed or open, the interior doors?

A They are uniformly without exception, except for maybe once in a blue moon we'll open this

1 one, and it does have that little device, you know, on  
2 the bottom --

3 MR. HILL: Your question is are the  
4 interior doors?

5 A Oh, the interior doors? No, ma'am. I'm  
6 sorry. They are always locked when I come in in the  
7 morning.

8 Q They are each locked?

9 A Each is locked.

10 MR. HILL: Each of these interior doors  
11 is locked?

12 A They are. So it's a pain in the neck.  
13 This door, this one will be unlocked. This one's  
14 locked, that one's locked and that one's locked. That  
15 one's locked. That one's locked.

16 MR. HILL: One key fit everything?

17 A Every -- every door is fit one key and  
18 that is key number 50, that one right there.

19 GRAND JUROR: Thanks.

20 MR. HILL: Yes, ma'am.

21 BY GRAND JUROR:

22 Q Those interior doors, you need the key to  
23 open them, but in order to lock them it's just a matter  
24 of turning the knob?

25 A Yes, ma'am, that's correct, turning that

1 little, I don't know what it's called. I call it a  
2 doohickie.

3 Q Okay. That works for me.

4 THE WITNESS: Yes, sir.

5 BY GRAND JUROR:

6 Q To avoid the fuzzy issue as to when you  
7 hung the marching picture on the right wall right at  
8 the door there, what was hanging there before the  
9 marching picture?

10 A A picture of Tampa.

11 Q Good.

12 A I have a picture of Tampa that I actually  
13 moved, it's right here now. But I think on July 27th  
14 the picture of Tampa was still there because I think  
15 Dick Matt didn't give me the "Tombstone" picture until  
16 right after that.

17 FURTHER EXAMINATION

18 BY MR. HILL:

19 Q To clarify, before the picture was here  
20 the picture was where?

21 A Right here behind the couch.

22 Q Okay.

23 A That's where I have kept it since January  
24 of 1998.

25 Q Can you quickly characterize for us or

1 distinguish for us, if you will, the neatness,  
2 security, that type of thing of your current J.A.  
3 versus Myra Gomez as far as leaving in the evenings?

4 A Myra Gomez is meticulous and the office  
5 was immaculate. Lori is neither meticulous nor  
6 immaculate, so it is a lot messier right now than it  
7 ever was. When Myra left -- I keep Monday, Tuesday,  
8 Wednesday, Thursday, Friday's files right there. And  
9 Myra was the one that put all those little stickies,  
10 Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Myra  
11 would have each one lined up.

12 She would have my files for the next  
13 day's hearing on this desk right here in this corner so  
14 that I could come in and look at them. I do that  
15 evening, because I often come back in the evening, or  
16 early the next morning at 7:30, right there. I mean,  
17 everything was meticulous.

18 The in-basket or the -- her out-basket  
19 and my in-basket was right here. It would be neatly  
20 stacked and everything would be folded and right on top  
21 of each other. Her in-basket would be empty every day  
22 when she left. There would not be anything left.

23 Q What about security distinctions between  
24 the two as far as making sure your office was secured  
25 from the outside?